

## **Celebrating a special birthday in our community**

Birthdays are special. This is especially true for the Packard Avenue Community Clinic that recently celebrated its 12th birthday. The clinic opened its doors on September 15, 1998. Since that time, more than 15,000 patient visits have been recorded, including more than 600 health care visits this year alone. This 12-year milestone is especially significant since the clinic is staffed entirely by volunteers, including many Aurora Health Care caregivers who regularly donate their time and talents.

Located at 5854 South Packard Avenue in Cudahy, the clinic is designed to provide free, basic medical care to uninsured residents of southeast Milwaukee County on a short-term basis. This clinic is sponsored by Lakeshore Medical Clinic, with support from Aurora St. Luke's South Shore and private supporters. Physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners from Lakeshore Medical Clinics are a vital part of the volunteer staff.

The health clinic is only open on Tuesday evenings and all medical services are provided at no cost to those served. The medical problems treated at the clinic range from routine ailments to more serious medical conditions. Although the severity of their illness or disease varies, clinic patients share one important commonality - they have no other source for medical care.

One of the clinic organizers and long-time volunteer is Edward Wrench, RN, from the Cudahy Health Department. Ed explained, "People treated at the Packard Avenue Community Clinic are not covered by Medicare, Medicaid, or any type of private insurance. Some are unemployed or between jobs and others work in low-paying jobs and simply can't afford medical treatment."

The clinic is open from 6 to 8:30 p.m., and can accommodate about 30 patients each week. Ed said, "Since the clinic runs on a first-come, first-served basis, people can expect to wait awhile, before being seen by a medical professional. Most everyone is extremely grateful for the medical attention they receive."

The volunteer staff includes nearly 60 physicians and approximately 25 non-physician volunteers, including nurses and other volunteers who perform clerical duties.

Ed describes the clinic as being "a real grass-roots effort and a valuable asset to the South Shore community." He said, "It allows physicians and others to give back to the community in a meaningful way. Before the clinic opened 12 years ago, there was no free medical care in this area. Today, the Packard Avenue Community Clinic continues to fill a growing need in our community. Additional volunteers are always needed, so we can continue to care for the health and well being of our own community."

Carolynn Glocka, Vice President & Chief Administrative Officer/Nurse Executive at Aurora St. Luke's South Shore, volunteers on the clinic's board of directors. She said, "Everyone deserves to have access to basic medical care, regardless of their station in life or ability to pay. We are pleased to support such a worthwhile effort in our own community. We're proud of the Aurora caregivers and all of the volunteers who help keep this clinic running. To everyone involved with the clinic, we say: 'Happy 12th Birthday!'"